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ABSTRACT

This unit is designed to introduce upper elementary and middle school students to the traditional cultures of the people of Southern Africa, particularly the Swazi. Information on housing and family life covers family structure, marriage customs, respect for ancestors, male and female roles, employment, eating customs, and handicrafts. An overview concerning the policy of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa is given. Information on schools and education includes children's noneducational duties in the schools, language used in the classroom, testing policies, teaching materials, transportation to school, and after-school recreation. Statistics are given for blacks, whites, coloreds (mixture of black and another race), and Asians in the areas of population, universities designed for each of these groups, literacy rates, and required school attendance. Twelve illustrations depicting tribal life are provided for class discussion. Subjects include types of housing, tribal activities, a school room, a Swazi kraal, and the clothing worn by the people. The student activity section includes two writing assignments two map skills worksheets, three word puzzles, and a quiz. An answer key is given. Additional suggested classroom activites and references are included. (EM)

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TRADITIONAL PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

A STUDENT ACTIVITY UNIT ...

by

Leslie Hendrikson

For Upper Elementary &
Middle School Students

December, 1983
Boulder, Colorado

S0015226

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**Materials in this unit may be photocopied for classroom use.

TRADITIONAL PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa has a multiracial population in which 71% of the people are Black and 17% are white. The Black Africans are mainly descendents of Sotho and Nguni peoples who migrated southward centuries ago. Some of the tribes in this region are the Zulu, the Swazi, the Sotho, and the Xhosa. The many tribal languages spoken in this region are branches of the Bantu language. The whites in the area are primarily descendants of Dutch, French, English, and German settlers. Many of the Black people in southern Africa still practice very old traditions and live the way their ancestors have lived for hundreds of years. This unit is designed to introduce students to the way many traditional cultures in southern Africa live. As a former Peace Corps volunteer in Swaziland, Africa, I am most familiar with the Swazi people so most of the examples are with the Swazi way in mind. However, like the American Indian, although the tribes are similar in many ways, they are each distinct in their own way and cannot be generalized. Much of what is presented in this unit is based on personal experience stemming from "living in" with traditional Swazi families, teaching in their schools, and traveling around the region. For this reason, the unit presents an "inside view" from an American perspective and is quite possibly an interesting reprieve from the typical textbook treatment of African peoples.

Introduction

The Family:

One of the most interesting things about traditional African societies is the family. In southern Africa, the large extended family is common. An extended family might include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. In most traditional societies, members of an extended family live together as one group. Many extended families in Africa are polygamous, which means that there are two or more wives in the family. Monogamous (families with one wife) are also found but they are more common in the cities and among Christian Africans (Boyd, 81).

It is difficult to give a clear picture of African families because family structure and marriage customs vary from tribe to tribe. Another reason is that western ideas and the growth of cities and industry are upsetting traditional ways of life. (Boyd, 81).

In most polygamous familes, the husband does not marry all of his wives at once. If his brother dies, he is expected to marry the brother's widows. Each time a man takes a new wife, he or his family group makes a gift to the wife's family. This gift is called lobola. Lobola in southern Africa is usually a designated number of cattle.

The following report by anthropologist Hilda Kuper describes marriage customs among the Swazi, a Bantu speaking people in southern Africa. (Look up the country of Swaziland on your map).

> "After long formal negotiations between representatives of the two families, the girl, accompanied by her bridal party, is sent from her home with the blessing of her ancestors and gifts for her in-laws. Initially, she must appear reluctant to leave her own group, and must reject the

demonstrations of welcome made by her future in-laws. In a dramatic scene in the ritual, she stands in the cattle pen of the groom's home, lamenting her plight and appealing to her brother's to rescue her. They have been waiting in hiding, and rush to her assistance. But, in the end, she accepts her fate and her future mother-in-law smears her with red clay... and puts a baby on her lap to demonstrate her role as wife and mother. The transfer of lobola in the following winter formalizes the change in her legal status. The number of cattle given for bridewealth varies with the girl's rank: twelve head is the current rate for commoners, princesses command fifteen and more. A boy's father should provide the animals for his son's first wife. *

Traditional African societies have strong group feelings. They see themselves as part of a family, a kinship group, or an ethic group. These group ties give their lives meaning and satisfaction. American ideas of individualism and "doing your own thing" would seem strange to these people. A child is usually considered a child until he/she marries regardless of whether he/she is fourteen or forty years of age.

Ancestors are respected and honored. Many traditional Africans believe that at death, a person enters into the "spirit world". Once in the spirit world, an ancestor remains a member of the family and the kinship group and has authority over the living. (ERCA, p. 96) A special hut us usually reserved for "the ancestors" and is usually reserved only for ceremonial occasions. Often a big bowl of "tjwala" (a home-brewed beverage) is set inside the ancestor's hut. The Swazi believes that the ancestors "drink" the special offering because the

* James L. Gibbs (ed.), The Peoples of Africa (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 487.

level always goes down after several days. Why do you think this happens?

Maize is grown in southern Africa is is the main food eaten by traditional peoples. In most African tribes in southern Africa, the men clear the land. Women do most of the agriculture work in the fields. They also cultivate small gardens near their homes. (Boyd, 80).

Often the men in traditional families must live away from their families. In the lands which the government has given the Blacks, there are not enough resources to support large numbers of people so many Africans must go to the cities to fill the need for cheap labor in white industries and in South Africa's rich gold mines. (Boyd, 175). Many men in Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, and the homelands of South Africa must leave their families to work in the mines. When a Black man goes to South Africa, things are very different. South Africa is very rich and modern. In addition, the Republic of South Africa has laws called "Apartheid". These laws are intended to keep the races "apart". A Black man in South Africa may not use the same buses, benches, elevators, beaches, restrooms, hotels, or schools as a white man.

> "Black Africans are allowed to work in white areas by day, but must return at night to their "locations"- which are Black-only areas near white settlements." (Boyd, p. 170.)

It is not uncommon when visiting a rural homestead in southern Africa to find only women, children, and the elders living there, while the men seek work in the cities and in South Africa's mines.

A WORD ABOUT THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

This policy of "apartheid" is one of the major problems of the world today. The United Nations is working to isolate South Africa from the rest of the world because of its actions against Blacks. (Martelli, p 367). Black South Africans cannot vote or run for office and are not considered citizens of South Africa even though they are the majority. In recent years, the South African government has been setting up "homelands". These homelands are considered independent nations of which the Blacks are citizens. No country in the world except South Africa accepts these Black nations as real nations. (Martelli, p. 369). Although countries like Swaziland, Lesotho, and Botswana are independent, they are economically dependent on South Africa which means South Africa has a great deal to say about how these countries are run. Namibia (or Southwest Africa) is also controlled by South Africa.

Everyone in South Africa must carry a card called a "pass". It shows a person's name, color class, and address so the police will know where people are allowed to be. The population of the Republic of South Africa consists of four major racial groups: Blacks (21 million), Whites (5 million), "Colored" people (mixtures of Black and other races-2.75 million), and Asians (0.75 million).(Martelli, p. 368). Notice the large number of black people in comparison to the numbers of white people.

REMEMBER: SOUTHERN AFRICA IS A REGION WHICH INCLUDES ALL OF THE COUNTRIES IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF AFRICA.

SOUTH AFRICA IS THE TERM COMMONLY USED TO MEAN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, WHICH IS A NATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

The Home:

Different tribes in southern Africa live in different types of huts. Some live in villages and others live scattered throughout the countryside.

Zulu families live in villages, called kraals, made up of huts arranged into a circle. Zulu houses are round, like beehives, and they are thatched with grass. The floors are mud of a hard mixture made from clay and dung. In the center of the kraal is a pen in which the Zulus keep their cattle. (Allen & Jennings, 91) It is interesting to note that the Swazi calls the pen in which they keep their cattle, the "kraal". Since the Zulus and the Swazis have traditionally been rivals, it is possible that Swazis adopted their use of the term "kraal" as an insult to the Zulus! Swazis do not traditionally live in villages, but rather in clusters of huts representing one large family. Their huts are usually square and also made of mud and grass. One of the huts in their "homestead" is shaped like a beehive and is used for the ancestors.

Often straw is tied into a small brush-like shape at the top of each hut. When someone in the family dies, this is cut off the hut as a sign of respect. Many traditional people also shave their head as a sign of respect when someone dies.

One of the huts is usually used for a "kitchen". The women usually cook on a wood burning stove inside the hut or in a large pot placed over an open fire in front of the hut. Traditional Swazis and Sotho people have many customs about the proper way to eat. Women always sit on the ground and only men should sit on benches. Men eat with other men and women eat only with other women and children.

Several family members eat from one bowl using their right hands. It is perfectly acceptable to eat with one's hands! Notice that it is not acceptable to use one's left hand, This is true thoughout much of Africa. It is a grave insult to give or receive something with one's left hand and to do so would greatly offend a traditional African.

One of the chores of traditional Africans is the daily fetching of water. Water must be carried to the homestead from nearby streams or taps. This is the responsibility of women and young girls. It is amazing to see women balance such large containers of water on their heads! Young girls are also responsible for sweeping the homestead, helping build and repair huts, and helping care for children. Young boys are responsible for herding the family goats and cattle. It is not uncommon to see boys as young as seven or eight years of age herding enormous horned cattle by themselves!

Women and young girls wash their clothing in nearby rivers and dry them over rocks and bushes. Children often use this opportunity to bathe or swim. Unfortunately, the water is often polluted and unsafe to play in or drink.

After the day is done, families return to their huts. Families sleep on straw mats. The huts have almost no furniture in them because the hut is used mainly for shelter. Because of the warm climate, most of the activities are carried on outdoors.

Each African ethnic group has its own special handicraft. For example, Swazis are known for their beautiful carved masks and wood sculpture. The Sotho make beautiful mohair weavings in much the same way as Native Americans in the United States. In Botswana, the people weave beautiful baskets. The baskets of Botswana each have a unique

pattern which tells a story. In addition to various handicrafts, each ethnic group has their own special songs, dances, ceremonies, and legends.

School:

The schools throughout the Republic of South Africa and southern Africa model after the schools in England. Children are required to wear uniforms to school and pay for their schooling. They must also pay for their books, provide their own lunches, and find their own transportation. Children clean their own schools during a special period reserved for cleaning. There are no janitors - only maintenance people to repair the buildings.

In the Black schools, students are forbidden to speak their native language and are only allowed to speak English. In the Republic of South Africa, students must speak either a language called Afrikaans (spoken by Whites) or English. Can you imagine what it would be like to learn in another language?

When a student is about 13, he/she must pass a special exam called the Junior Certificate (JC) Exam. If a student does not pass this exam, he is not allowed to continue in school. When a student finishes his last year of high school, he is required to pass another exam in order to graduate. Very few Black African students pass this exam because the English used in this exam is so difficult to understand.

Students write their lessons in special notebooks called "exercise books." The Black schools are very poor and often schools don't have enough teachers. Sometimes students will sit in a classroom without a teacher and try to learn on their own! Teachers have no fancy books,

films, or modern equipment to teach with. Usually a Teacher's Guide and chalk are the only supplies a teacher has to teach with.

Students often do not live near the schools they attend. Sometimes they must live away from their families in order to attend school. Some students walk miles each day to school, leaving home before dawn and returning after dark.

A student who does not behave in school is usually kicked out so that another child may attend in his place. For the Black student in southern Africa, it is considered a privilege to go to school.

After school, girls often play a sport called "netball". Netball is similar to American basketball except that it is played outside and the rules differ. Boys play soccer, which is by far the most popular sport in southern Africa. Soccer is called "football" and few students in southern Africa are familiar with the American game of "football". Soccer in southern Africa is as popular as football is in America!

Surprising Facts

In southern Africa:

17% of the population is White
71% of the population is African (Black)
9% of the population is Colored (Mixture of Black & Another Race)
3% of the population is Asian (Includes Orientals & East Indians)

Of South Africa's 15 Universities:

10% are designed for Whites
3% are designed for Blacks
1% are designed for Coloreds
1% are designed for Asians

The Literacy Rate for People Over 15 Years Old Has Been Estimated At:

98% for Whites
50% for Blacks
75% for Coloreds
85% for Asians

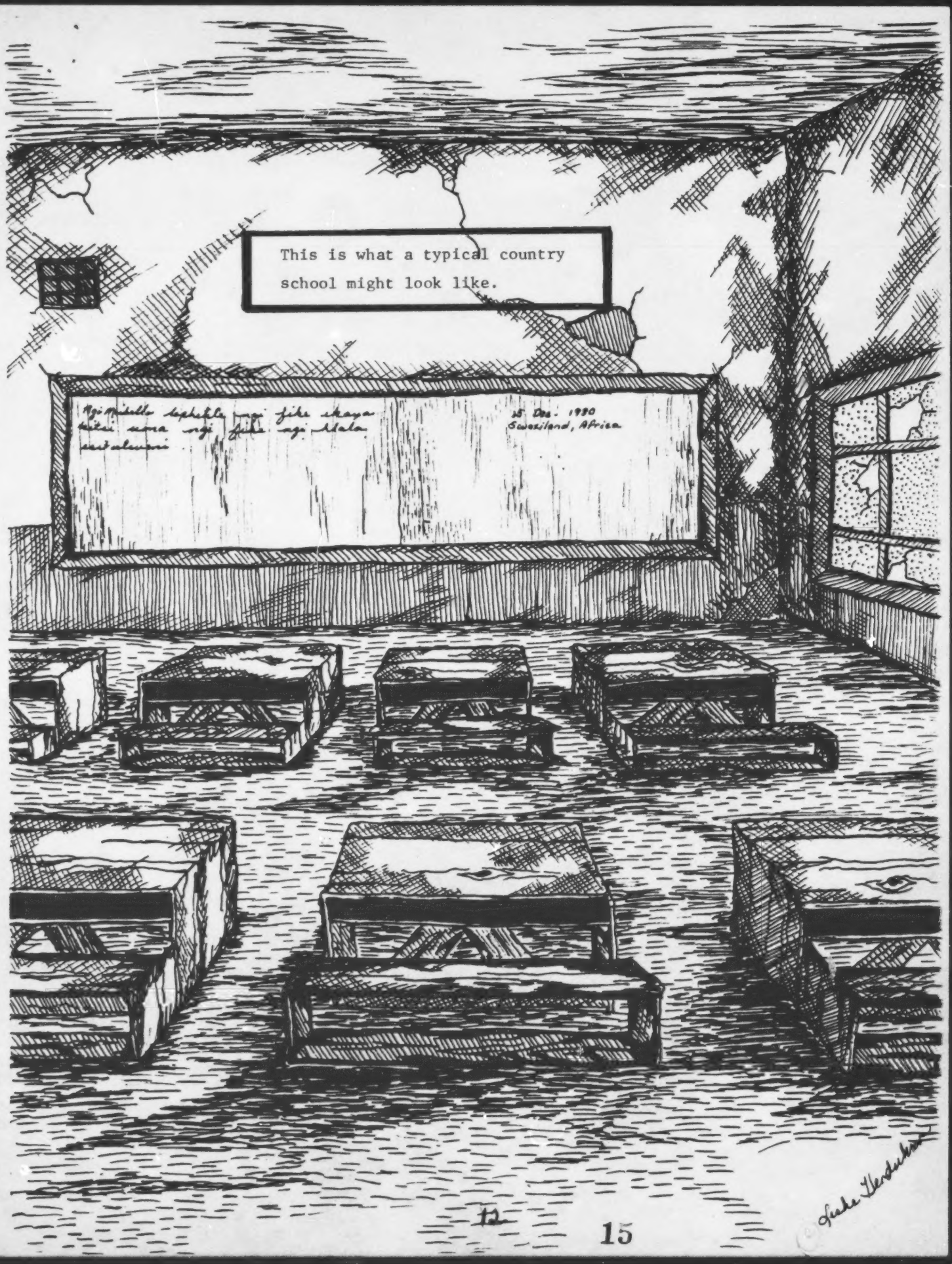
The number of Years Children are Required to Attend School:

7-16 years for Whites
4 years for Blacks
7-13 years for Coloreds
7-15 years for Asians

*U.S. Department of State statistics, 1980.

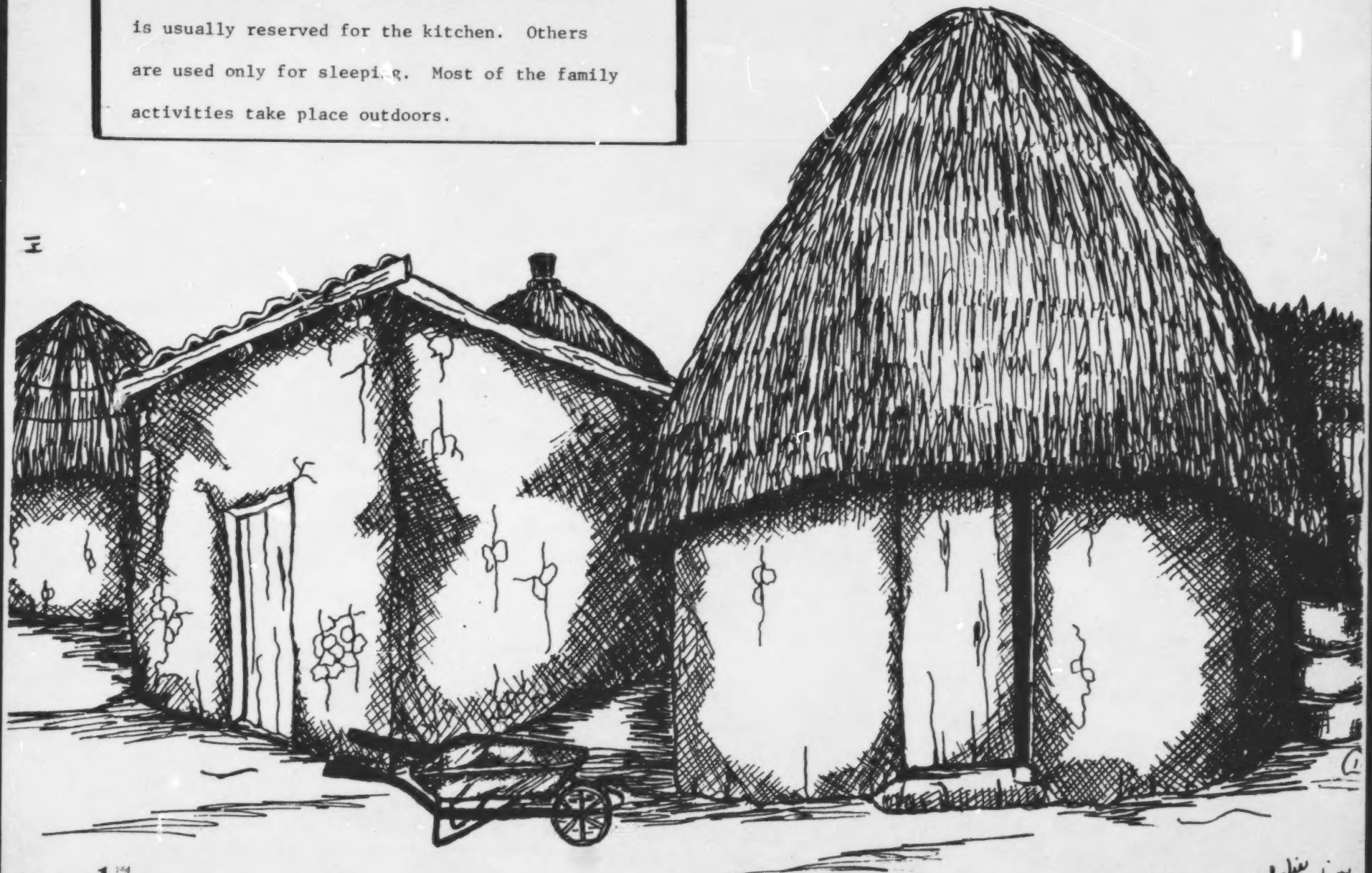
VISUAL AIDS:

For Discussion

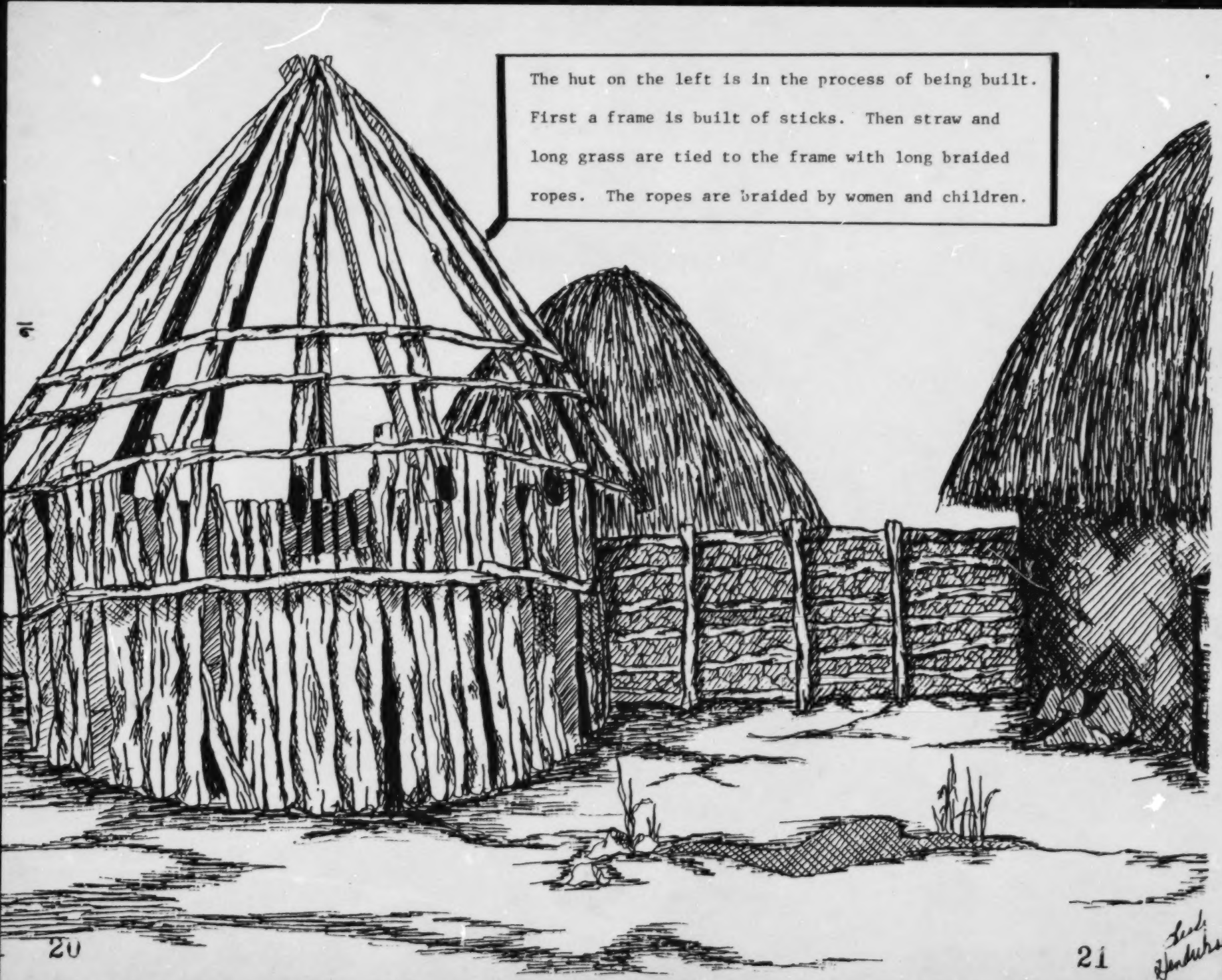

This is what a typical country school might look like.
15 Dec. 1990
Swaziland, Africa

A Homestead

This is a typical "homestead." Different members of the family live in different huts. One hut is usually reserved for the kitchen. Others are used only for sleeping. Most of the family activities take place outdoors.



The "Kraal" or place where animals are kept looks something like this.


The hut on the left is in the process of being built. First a frame is built of sticks. Then straw and long grass are tied to the frame with long braided ropes. The ropes are braided by women and children.

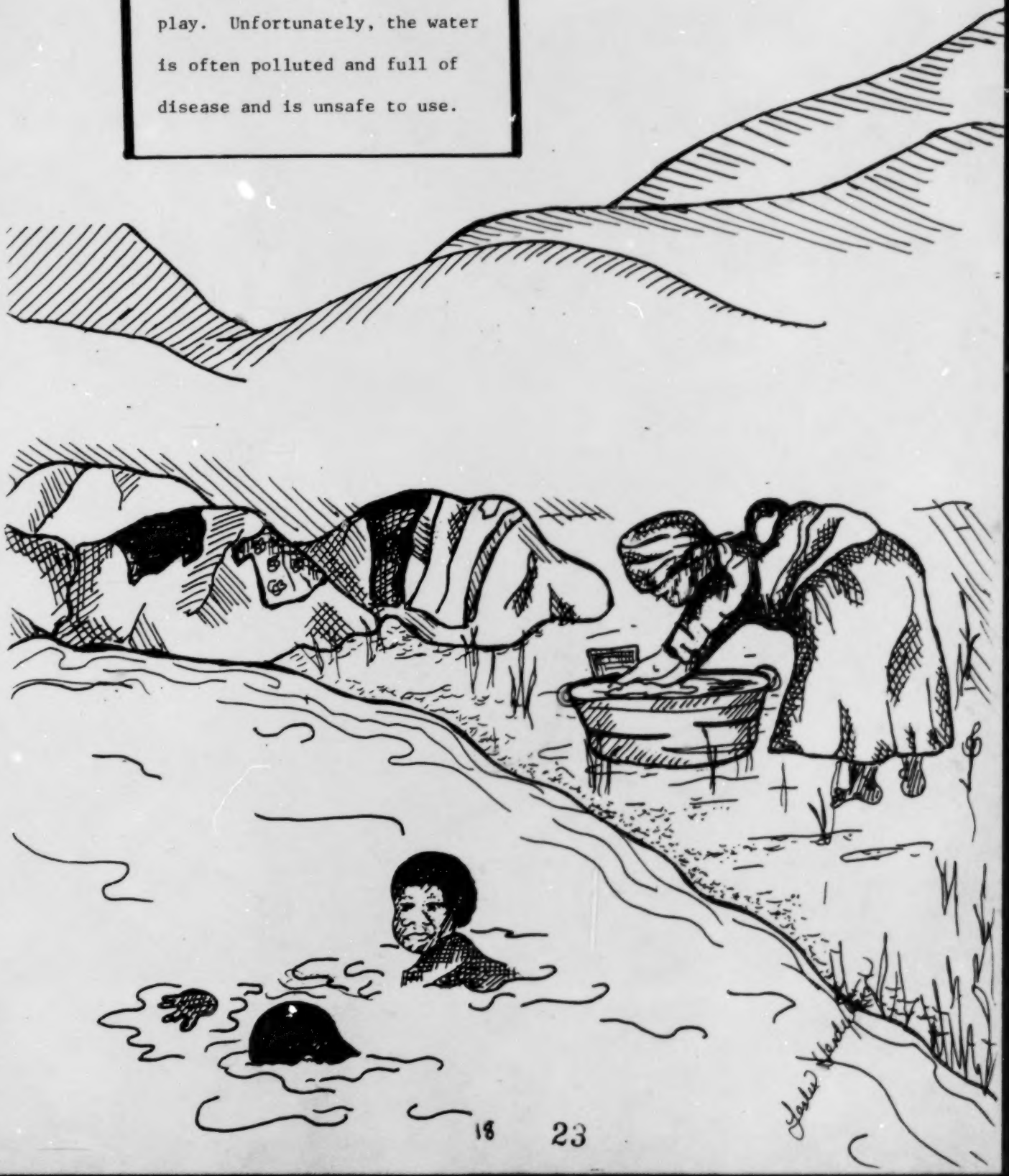
Leah Henderson

A family that is very poor may construct a home out of whatever can be found.

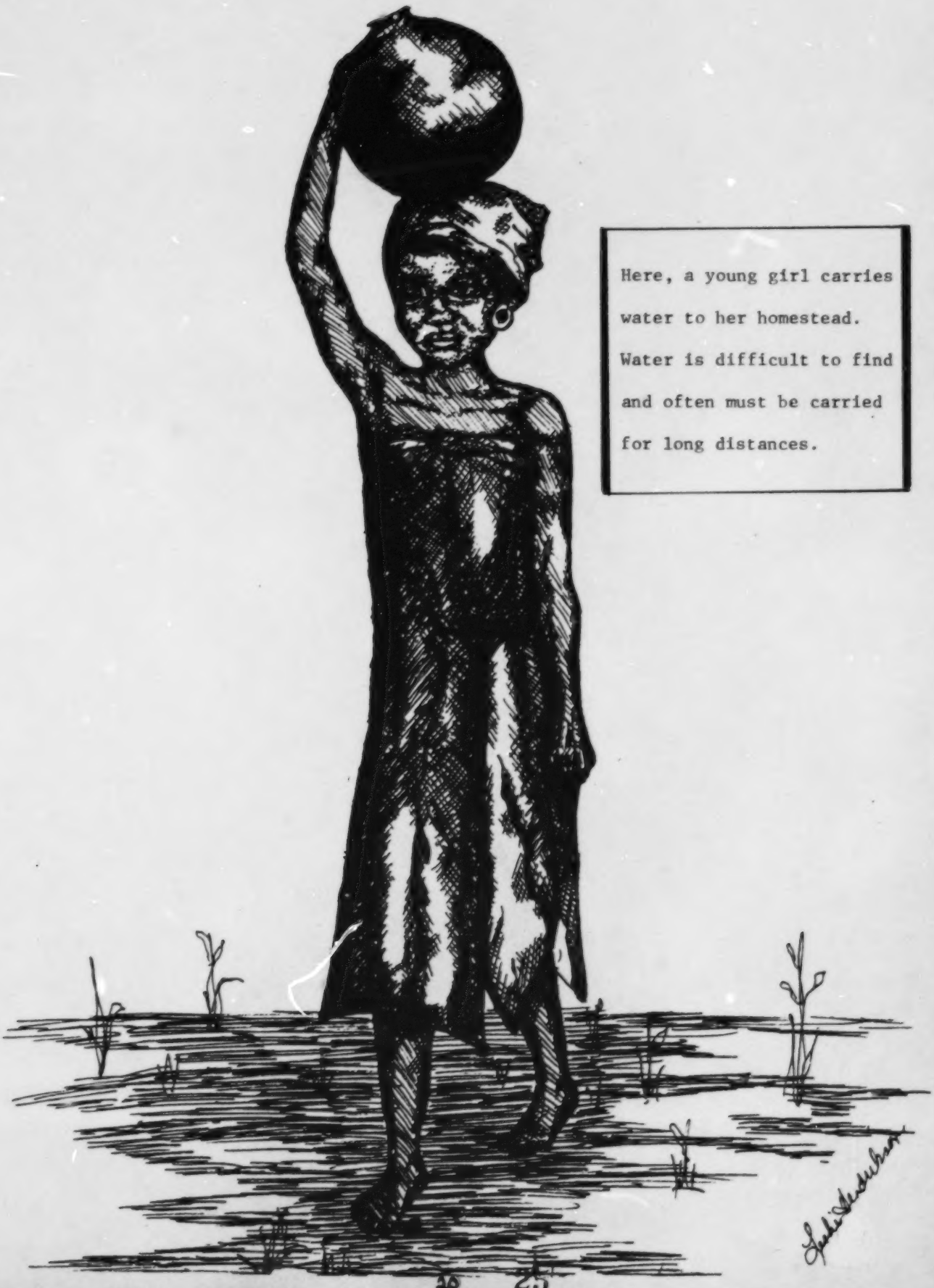
Notice the basins used for bathing.

Judie Hutchinson

Clothing is usually washed in nearby rivers and dried on the rocks or bushes. Children use this opportunity to bathe and play. Unfortunately, the water is often polluted and full of disease and is unsafe to use.



In most traditional societies in southern Africa, there are special "witch doctors" known as "Sangomas" or "Diviners" whom many believe have powers to heal the sick or predict peoples future. They use many special spells, herbs, and rituals to heal people. The "Diviner" pictured below throws small bones into a variety of patterns in order to tell fortunes.



Here, a young girl carries water to her homestead. Water is difficult to find and often must be carried for long distances.

This is the traditional dress of a young Swazi girl. She might dress this way for a marriage ceremony or for other special occasions.

In most traditional African societies, the men clear the land. Women do most of the agricultural work in the fields.

Julie Henderson

South Africa calls laws to keep the black people and the white people separated "APARTHEID". Black Africans are allowed to work in white areas by day, but must return at night to their homes or compounds, which are "black-only" areas near white settlements."*

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p 174

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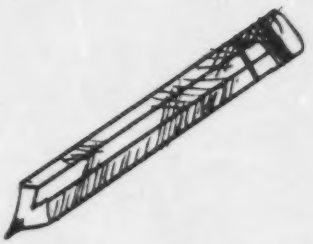


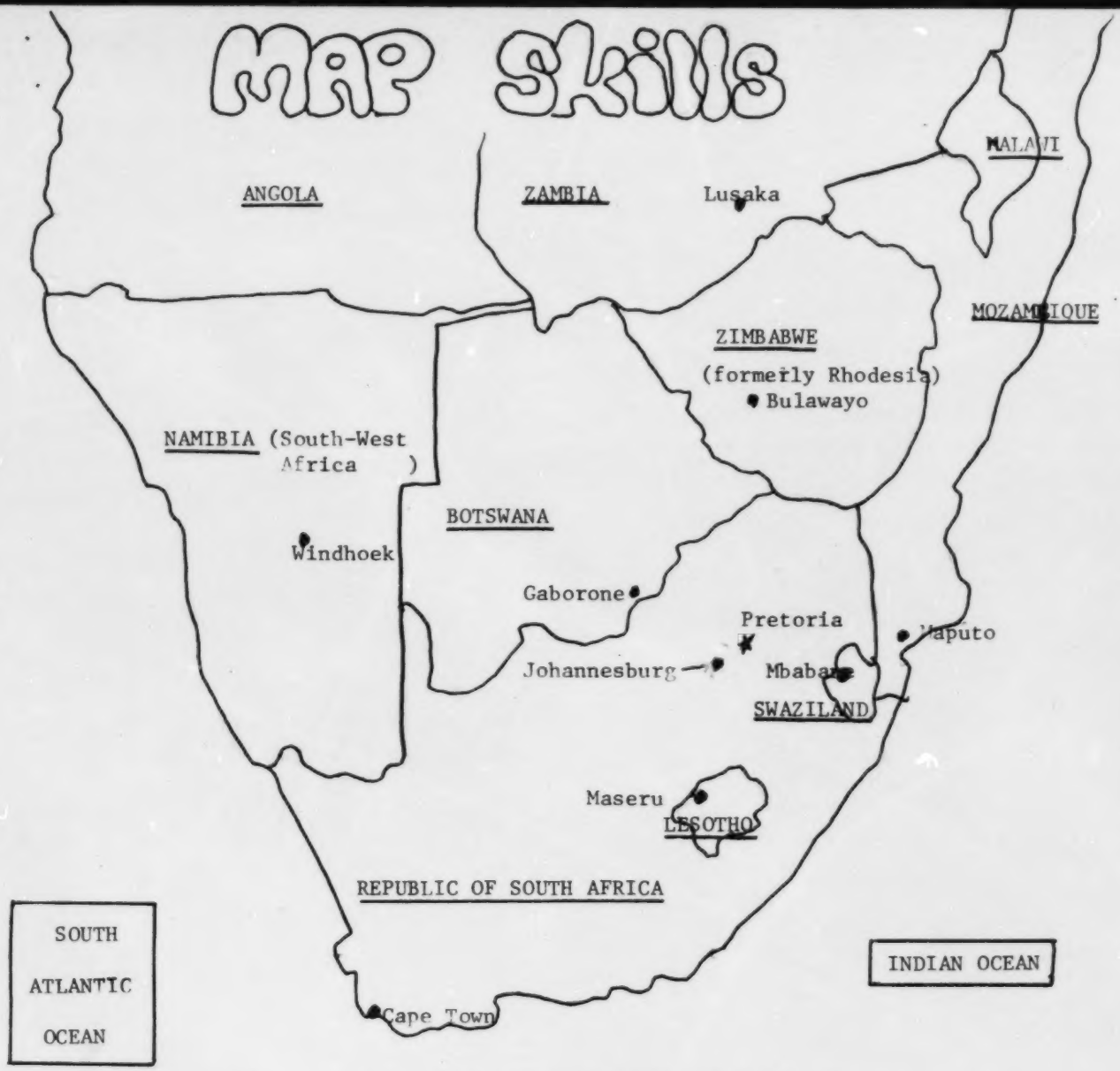
Student Activities

Letters

On your own paper, write a letter to an imaginary African friend. Tell him ways in which you live. (Compare your culture with the culture of a traditional African society.)

Imagine that you live on a homestead. Tell what it would be like. What would you like the least? What would you like the most?

MAP SKILLS



1. Name the national capital of the Republic of South Africa _____.
2. Name two small countries located within the Republic of South Africa _____ and _____.
3. Southern Africa is next to two Oceans. What are they? _____ and _____.
4. What is the new name for Southwest Africa? _____ What is now what used to be Rhodesia? _____.
5. Name at least six countries in southern Africa:

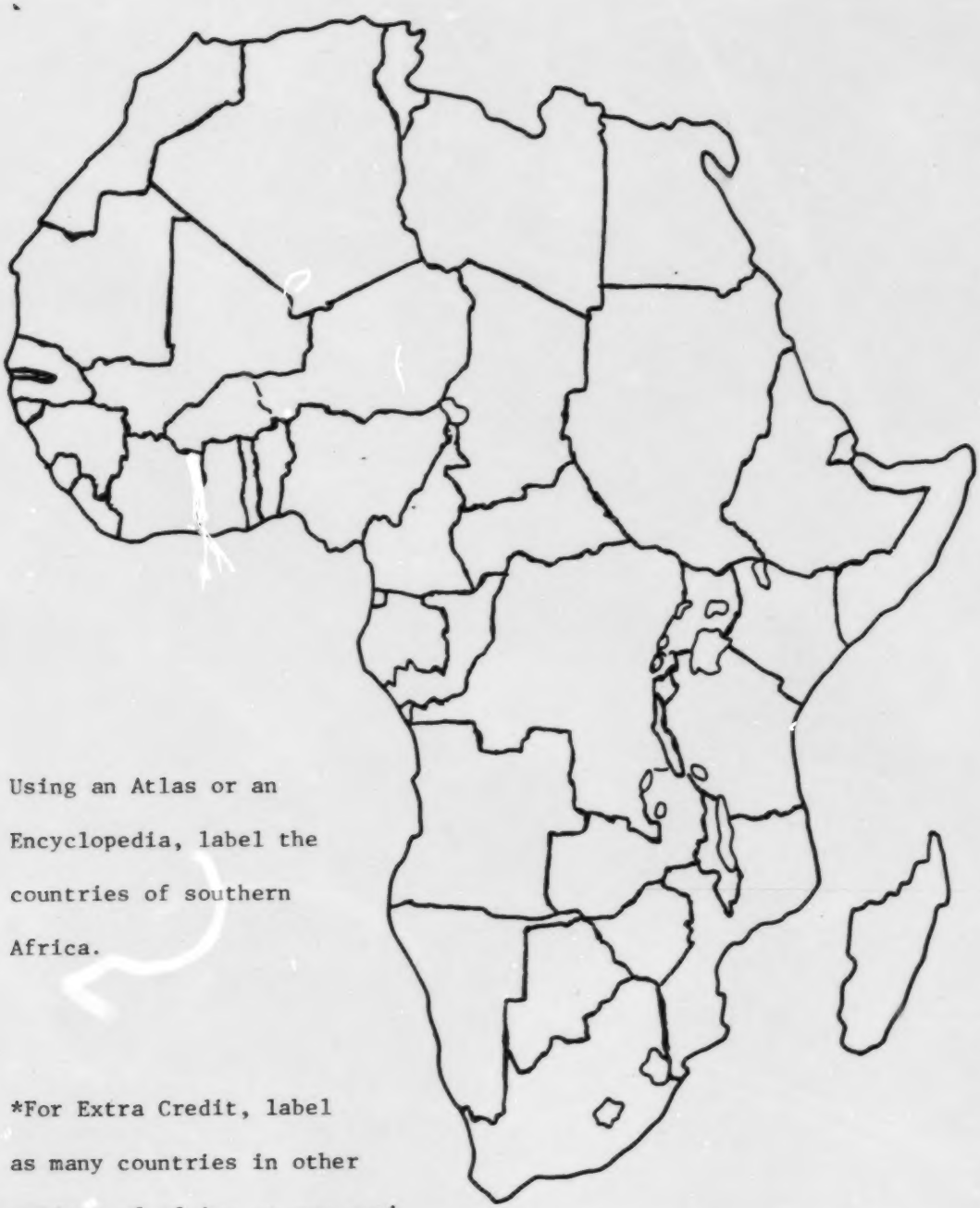
_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

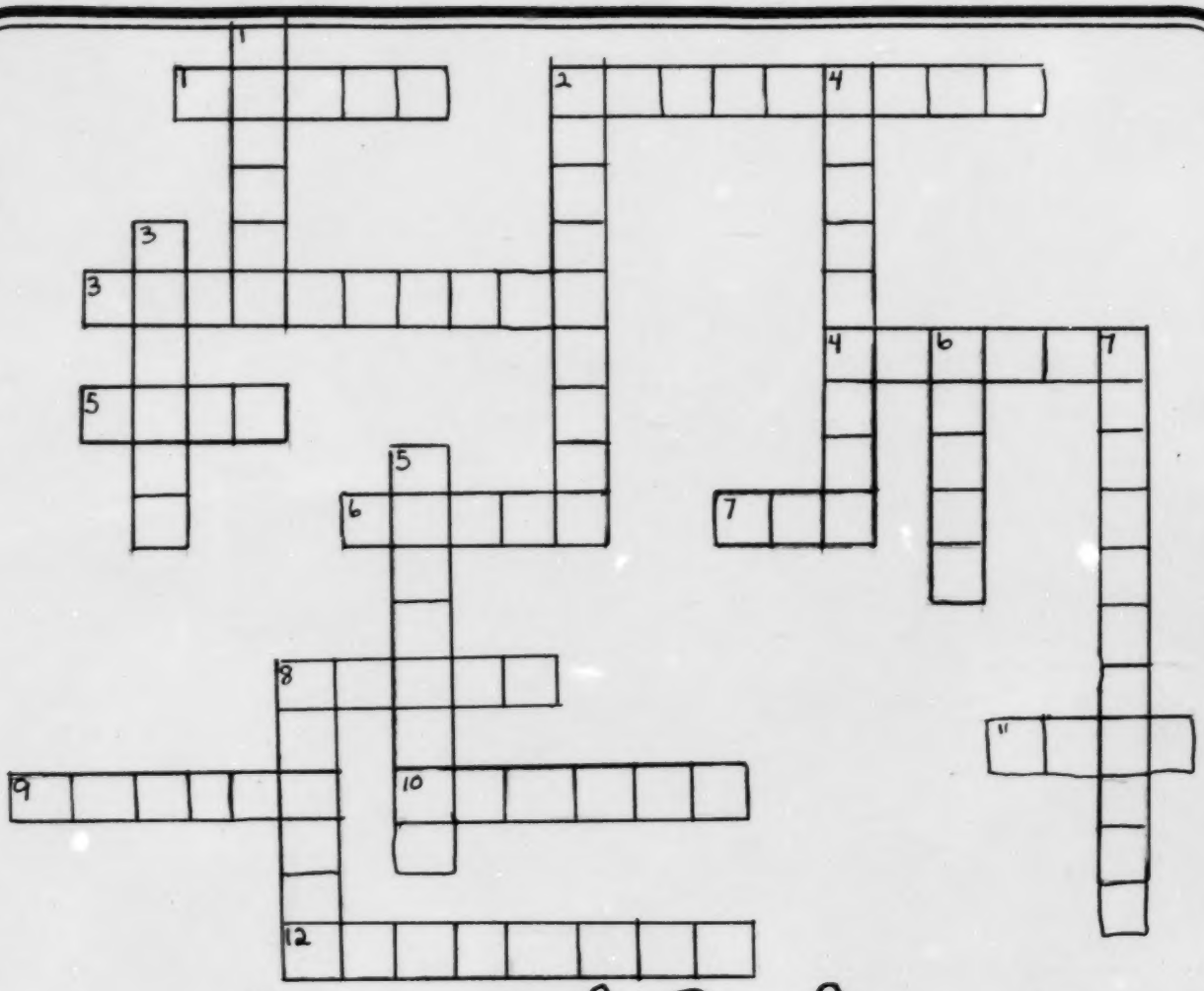
Africa

(1983)



Using an Atlas or an Encyclopedia, label the countries of southern Africa.

*For Extra Credit, label as many countries in other regions of Africa as you can!



Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. The major food is _____.
2. The law that says people of different races must live separately ____.
3. A family with more than one wife is _____.
4. A home-made beverage is _____.
5. Maize is what we call _____ .
6. Many men must go to work in the _____.
7. Huts are made of grass and _____.
8. The tribes of southern Africa are branches of the _____ tribe.
9. The continent we are studying is _____.
10. Women wash clothes in the _____.
11. Many traditional people live in_____.
12. Which part of Africa has laws called "Apartheid?"_____.

(continued.....)

CROSSWORD PUZZLE:

DOWN:

1. The _____ is very important in traditional cultures.

2. _____have a "spirit life" and are very important in the family.

3. _____is the gift given to the bride's family.

4. The cluster of huts in which the family lives is called the _____.

5. "Fortune tellers" and "healers" are called _____.

6. Most of the work done on the homestead is done by _____.

7. Farming means much the same as _____.

8. The South African government has set aside separate areas for the _____ to live in.

Word Search !!

A C R N B X P L M P Z T Y L M U E W B M G L A

F N P Z Q E T U I P A S D F G H J K L B V C X

R I V E R S Q W E R T Y U I O P C O W S A S C

I Z X X C V B N M A S D F G H J L Y O E W Q X

C W U T R B N M Z X C V B N M A S D M F G G H

A N C E S T O R S Q W E R T Y H O M E S T E A D

Q E R N T Y U I W O P A S D F U E R N S R E C V

L V Q D W E R T A G R I C U L T U R E S A W E R

M N V E C X Z A Z S D E R T Y S U I V B D N E R

L Q W D E R T Y I A S E R F L G H J K L I Z X C

B N M V C X Z A L E S O T H O S D F G H T W E R

A B O T S W A N A V B N J K B O R E S T I Y E R

Q W R S V B N S N W E N T A O G H W E R O I P O

L B R S U P M S D T W E N W L X W E R I N O P Q

Q W E R T Y U I O P A S D F A F G H J K A L Z A

Q W E R T Y U I O P A S D F G H J K L Z L Q W D

Find the following (words go only across and down):

AFRICA
RIVERS
EXTENDED
ANCESTORS
SWAZILAND
AGRICULTURE
HUTS
HOMESTEAD
COWS
WOMEN
HOMESTEAD
TRADITIONAL
LOBOLA
LESOTHO
BOTSWANA

WORD Scramble

zmiae

esrtib

cifra

unbta

lakra

tshu

Quiz

1. Two small black-ruled countries within southern Africa are _____ and _____.

2. People in traditional societies often live in _____ families.

3. When a man marries, he or his family must give the brides family a gift called _____.

4. Why do men often leave their homes to live in South Africa?_____

_____

5. The name of the place animals are kept is the _____.

6. Young girls must help their families by helping _____, _____, and _____.

7. Young boys must help their families by _____.

8. A popular sport in southern Africa is _____.

9. The law that says blacks and whites must live separately is called the law of _____.

10. Children must _____ to go to school and must wear _____.

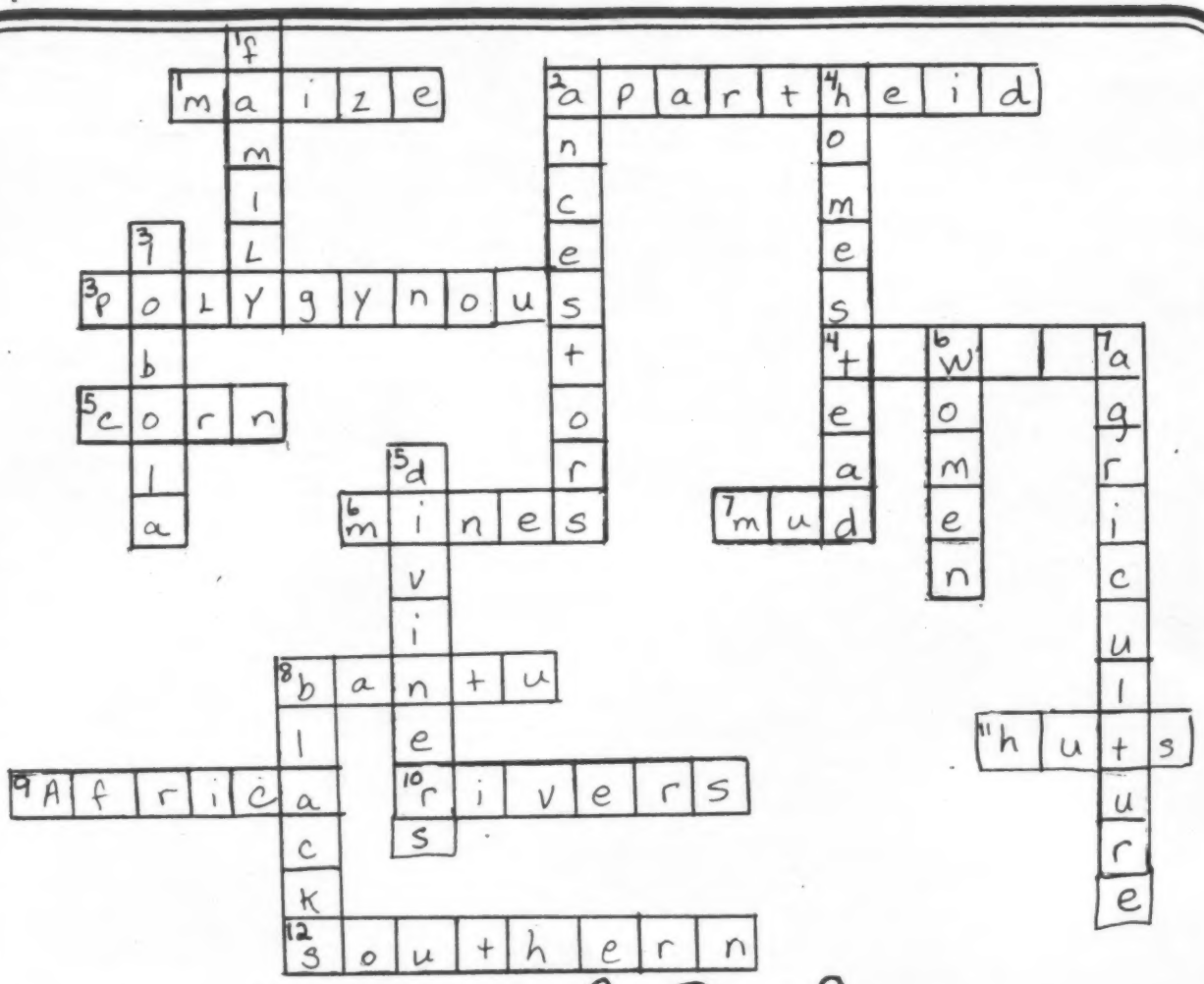
11. When a family has more than one wife, it is said to be_____.

Answer Keys

MAP SKILLS

1. Name the national capital of the Republic of South Africa Pretoria.
2. Name two small countries located within the Republic of South Africa Swaziland and Lesotho.
3. Southern Africa is next to two Oceans. What are they? Indian Ocean and South Atlantic Ocean.
4. What is the new name for Southwest Africa? Namibia What is now what used to be Rhodesia? Zimbabwe.
5. Name at least six countries in southern Africa:

Republic of South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Malawi (or Botswana, or Namibia, or Zambia, or Angola).



Crossword Puzzle

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6. Many men must go to work in the _____.
7. Huts are made of grass and _____.
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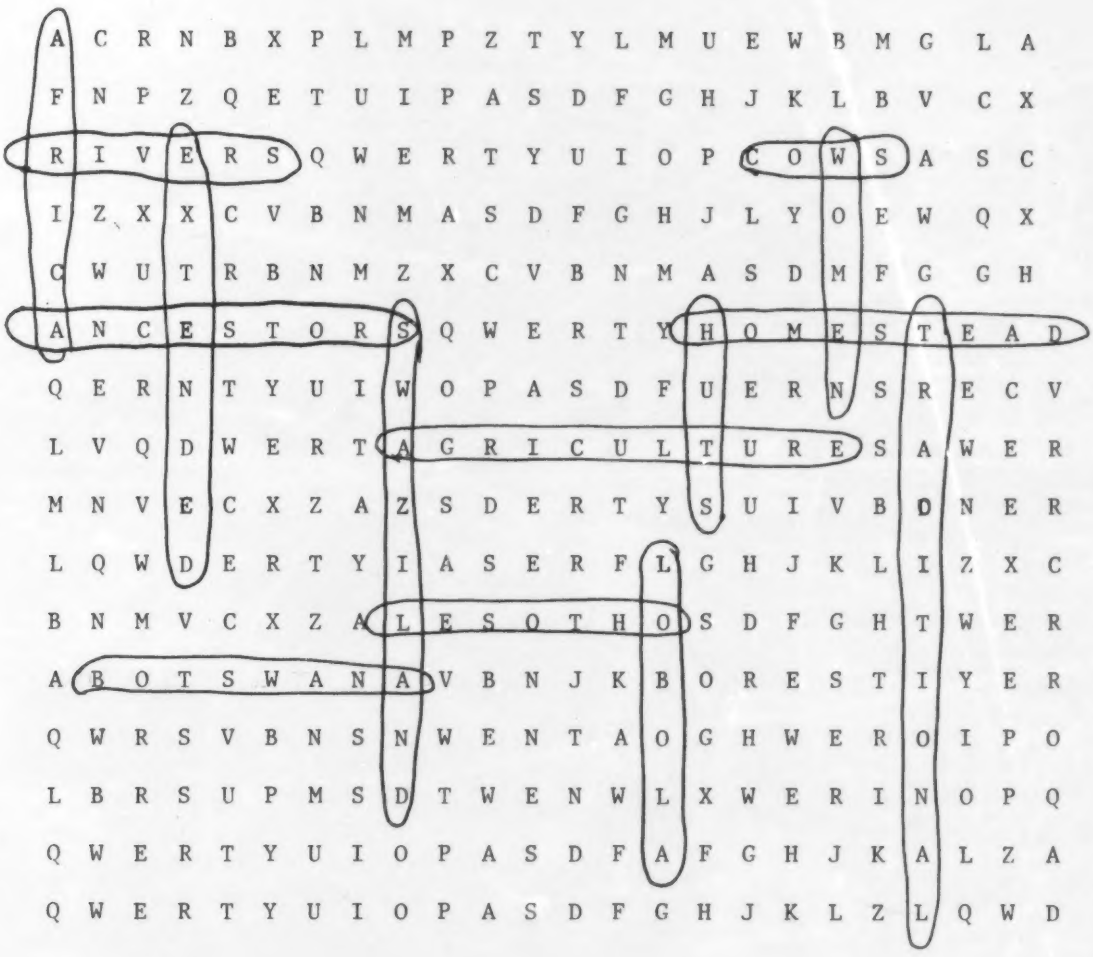
9. The continent we are studying is _____.
10. Women wash clothes in the _____.
11. Many traditional people live in_____.
12. Which part of Africa has laws called "Apartheid?"_____.

WORD SEARCH


A C R N B X P L M P Z T Y L M U E W B M G L A
F N P Z Q E T U I P A S D F G H J K L B V C X
R I V E R S Q W E R T Y U I O P C O W S A S C
I Z X X C V B N M A S D F G H J L Y O E W Q X
C W U T R B N M Z X C V B N M A S D M F G G H
A N C E S T O R S Q W E R T Y H O M E S T E A D
Q E R N T Y U I W O P A S D F U E R N S R E C V
L V Q D W E R T A G R I C U L T U R E S A W E R
M N V E C X Z A Z S D E R T Y S U I V B O N E R
L Q W D E R T Y I A S E R F L G H J K L I Z X C
B N M V C X Z A L E S O T H O S D F G H T W E R
A B O T S W A N A V B N J K B O R E S T I Y E R
Q W R S V B N S N W E N T A O G H W E R O I P O
L B R S U P M S D T W E N W L X W E R I N O P Q
Q W E R T Y U I O P A S D F A F G H J K A L Z A
Q W E R T Y U I O P A S D F G H J K L Z L Q W D

Find the following (words go only across and down):

AFRICA
RIVERS
EXTENDED
ANCESTORS
SWAZILAND
AGRICULTURE
HUTS
HOMESTEAD
COWS
WOMEN
HOMESTEAD
TRADITIONAL
LOBOLA
LESOTHO
BOTSWANA

WORD Scramble

zmiae	m a i z e
esrtib	t r i b e
cifra	A f r i c a
unbta	B a n t u
lakra	K r a a l
tshu	h u t s

Quiz

1. Two small black-ruled countries within southern Africa are Swaxiland and Lesotho.

2. People in traditional societies often live in extended families.

3. When a man marries, he or his family must give the brides family a gift called lobola.

4. Why do men often leave their homes to live in South Africa? because there is not enough work in their homelands.

5. The name of the place animals are kept is the Kraal.

6. Young girls must help their families by helping cook, sweep the homestead, and carry water.

7. Young boys must help their families by herding cattle.

8. A popular sport in southern Africa is soccer.

9. The law that says blacks and whites must live separately is called the law of Apartheid.

10. Children must pay to go to school and must wear uniforms.

11. When a family has more than one wife, it is said to be polygamous.

To Teachers:

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. HAVE STUDENTS CONSTRUCT A SCRAPBOOK OR POSTER, USING MAGAZINES SUCH AS NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. SHOW SOMETHING ABOUT EVERYDAY LIFE IN A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY.

2. HAVE STUDENTS ROLE PLAY A TRADITIONAL WEDDING CEREMONY.

3. HAVE STUDENTS CONSTRUCT MINIATURE MUD HUTS USING STICKS, GRASS, MUD, AND STRING. USE THE DRAWINGS AS A GUIDE.

4. HAVE STUDENTS DESIGN A BASKET, MASK, OR WEAVING.

5. HAVE A CLASS DISCUSSION ABOUT WHAT IT IS LIKE FOR THE BLACK MAN IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

6. HAVE STUDENTS READ THE BOOK "CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY" BY ALLAN PATON.

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ILLUSTRATIONS DRAWN ON LOCATION IN AFRICA BY LESLIE HENDRIKSON